



News Release

WISCONSIN ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Huge send-off planned for 430 Wisconsin National Guard artillery troops Saturday

Event scheduled for Air Force Reserve base in Milwaukee

State and military officials are planning a huge send-off ceremony for about 430 Wisconsin Army National Guard soldiers who were mobilized earlier this week.

The soldiers are members of 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery, headquartered in Milwaukee, with units in Sussex, Plymouth and Two Rivers. In addition, the battalion is being augmented by soldiers from other Wisconsin Army National Guard units from around the state. The battalion will leave Wisconsin Saturday, April 22, for mobilization processing and several months of additional training at Camp Shelby, Miss., before deploying overseas for one full year.

The entire battalion will gather with their families for a send-off on Saturday, April 22, at the Mitchell Field Air Reserve Station, home of the Air Force Reserve's 440th Airlift Wing. Following a 12:30 p.m. ceremony, soldiers will have a final hour with their families until boarding one of several chartered airliners that will fly them to Mississippi. As many as 2,000 family members are expected to join the 430 soldiers for the send-off.

The Mitchell Field send-off will be led by Gov. Jim Doyle, Maj. Gen. Al Wilkening and Brig. Gen. Kerry Denson. Other senior military officials will also be on hand, along with the Guard's 132nd Army Band of Madison, which has played for similar send-off and welcome home events for Guard units from around the state.

Local send-offs were scheduled in several of the battalion's hometown communities this week.

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Artillery battalion send-off

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Mobilization of 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery brings the total number of Wisconsin Army and Air National Guard members on active duty to about 2,400. Since Sept. 11, 2001, more than 7,100 soldiers and airmen from the Wisconsin National Guard — about 75 percent of the Guard's 9,700 member force — have served on active duty. Another Wisconsin Army Guard unit, the 1157th Transportation Company of Oshkosh, will begin active duty with about 160 soldiers in June.

About 1,880 soldiers and airmen of the Wisconsin National Guard are currently serving overseas.

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Note to Editors and News Directors: News media are welcome to cover the send-off of 430 soldiers of 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery at the U.S. Air Force Reserve's 440th Airlift Wing at Mitchell Field, Milwaukee on Saturday, April 22.

News media access to the base will be available after 11:00 a.m. Saturday morning. The official send-off ceremony will begin at 12:30 p.m. and last approximately 20 minutes. Soldiers will depart Mitchell Field aboard several chartered civilian airliners during the afternoon. From the end of the ceremony until they are called to board a flight, soldiers and their families will have time together at the airfield. News media may conduct interviews with consenting soldiers and family members. Senior military officials and public affairs officers will also be available for questions.

News media organizations wishing to cover this send-off event must call Tim Donovan (608-242-3050 or Cell 608-516-1777) in advance so arrangements can be made for access to the military installation. The 440th Airlift Wing is located off College Avenue along the south perimeter of General Mitchell International Airport.

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